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ABSTRACT

This yearbook presents seven articles on topics of interest to teachers of language and literature at all levels, kindergarten through college. Articles are: "Fourth Grade Shakespeare" (Mary McNulty); "What's That There in Your Crystal Ball?: Using Journals to Make Predictions" (Katie Wood); "The University English Professor in the High School English Classroom" (Stanley Rich); "Against 'Excellence': An Approach to Teaching Creative Writing" (David Starkey); "At the End: Moving towards Reading and Writing Integration in High School Language Arts" (P. L. Thomas); "Putting Correctness in Its Proper Place" (Donna M. Padgett); and "Literature Logs: A Tool for Dialogue and Response" (Laura S. Truesdale). Six book reviews conclude the yearbook. (RS)

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1992/1993

CAROLINA ENGLISH TEACHER

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Carolina English Teacher accepts articles, reviews, notes, descriptions of classroom strategies--in short, anything that might be of interest to teachers of language and literature at all levels, kindergarten through college. Manuscripts should be typed, double-spaced, with notes in MLA style. Submit one hard copy and an IBM disk with MS-Word, WordPerfect, or unformated ASCII files or three typed copies with a self-addressed, stamped envelope to Warren and Holly Westcott, Editors, *Carolina English Teacher*, c/o Department of English, Francis Marion University, Florence, South Carolina, 29501.

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FOURTH GRADE SHAKESPEARE

Mary McNulty
Francis Marion University

As a teacher of Shakespeare on the college level, I often regret that my students do not come to their college English courses with a built-in excitement and enthusiasm for the Bard. Once they begin seriously reading Shakespeare's plays and poems, however, they begin to see that the four centuries that separate them from the English Renaissance melt away because Shakespeare expresses what is important in human living. Although a few of Shakespeare's plays appear in the high school English curriculum, in the elementary schools there is usually no Shakespeare taught at all. The language and content are considered too difficult for the young student to comprehend.

My plan for introducing Shakespeare to younger children evolved after I read Kenneth Koch's book, *Rose, Where Did You Get That Red?* Koch maintains that children can enjoy great adult poems, and he teaches great poetry to third through sixth graders by having the children write their poems utilizing the ideas and form they find in the adult poetry. Thus, after reading and discussing Blake's "The Tyger" with the class, he has them compose a poem in the same pattern--asking questions of an animate thing. After introducing William Carlos Williams' "This Is Just to Say," Koch had the children write short, simple poems apologizing for a certain action or behavior.

I looked over the body of Shakespeare's shorter poems for one that was simple and easily understood. I was not quite ready to tackle the complexities of the sonnet form with children just beginning to read adult poetry, so I settled upon one of the songs from *Love's Labour's Lost*, which is often printed separately and entitled "Winter":

When icicles hang by the wall,
  And Dick the shepherd blows his nail,
And Tom bears logs into the hall,
  And milk comes frozen home in pail,
When blood is nipped and ways be foul,
Then nightly sings the staring owl,
    "Tu-whit, tu-who!"

A merry note,
While greasy Joan doth keel the pot.

When all aloud the wind doth blow,
  And coughing drowns the parson's saw,
And birds sit brooding in the snow,
  And Marian's nose looks red and raw,
When roasted crabs hiss in the bowl,
Then nightly sings the staring owl,
    "Tu-whit, tu-who!"

A merry note,

While greasy Joan doth keel the pot.
(V, ii, 920-937)

It is not difficult to make arrangements for a seventy-five minute time block with a fourth grade teacher. In the middle of February, she was eager for the children to have an out-of-the-ordinary experience to brighten a long winter day. So I arrived at the classroom armed with a tape recording of a musical rendition of the song and a printed copy for each of the twenty-five students.

To make sure that their musical expectations were not far removed from that of the audiotape I brought, I first discussed with them medieval musical instruments, especially the recorder. With their copies of the poem in hand, the children listened quietly. When it was finished, they requested that it be played again; obviously they were enthralled by the song of the owl.

The next step was the most difficult: to get the children past the language barriers of the poem. Many of the words in the poem were not in their vocabulary, and some had changed in meaning over the past four hundred years. We looked at the poem line by line, as I attempted to create a multi-sensory picture of winter in sixteenth century England. They could understand Dick the shepherd blowing on his fingers to get them warm, Mirian's red nose that was a result of a winter head cold, and so many people coughing in church on Sunday that the preacher could not be heard. They were delightfully appalled by greasy Joan, the cook, who accumulated layers of grease upon herself and her clothes by cooking over an open fire. Bathing took place only in the warmer months.

Together, we also looked at the form of the poem: two stanzas, each followed by a refrain. they saw, too, how the details of the poem piled up through the repetition of the word "when." The children understood the poem and became comfortable with it. They were ready to write.

Pointing out again to the group that Shakespeare wrote about the winter as he experienced it, I asked them to write a poem about the winter they knew in twentieth century South Carolina. The lines did not have to rhyme, and a refrain was optional. What they were to do was create a word picture in their language of the details of winter.

The response was quick and enthusiastic. Within a few seconds, twenty-five heads were bent over their desks and twenty-five hands were writing. I walked among them to give encouragement and suggestions, but most were independently following their own muses. Results came quickly--much faster than I expected--and each wanted to share the finished product with me.

If an outsider read these poems without knowing their origin, he or she would assume that these children lived in Minnesota or the Dakotas, not South Carolina. A recent snowfall, however, had made the experience of ice and cold all too vivid for them, and so they wrote about frozen feet, frosty breath, and snowbanks past their knees.

Their poems left me no doubts as to the poetic capabilities of nine and ten-year-olds. Many adapted the "when" structure from Shakespeare, and some used refrains, but a number of the children developed images which were highly creative.

Jerry, for instance, used the refrain to show the seeming endlessness of winter:

The snow falling to the ground,
Your feet frozen to your legs,
Sitting by the warm fire,
The ice as slippery as grease,
Wrapped up in the blankets,
Waiting for the summer to come.

As winter
Goes on and on and on

You go outside and feel the cold,
The owls staring at everyone,
Moonlight shines on the frozen ground,
The dog shakes and shivers,
You think your teeth are going to fall out,
Waiting for the summer to come.

As winter
Goes on and on and on

Another child also picked up on the dreariness of the season with a refrain of "The winter never ends."

Using Shakespeare's "when" structure, Trina built a cumulative effect into her poem. She attempted not too successfully to rhyme her lines. The original image she created in the fifth line, however, redeemed the rhyming flaws:

When brisk winds are blowing,
And fire places are glowing,
When hot chocolate is being made,
And children are all warmly tucked,
When Kleenex boxes are empty
And peoples' noses are red,
When sick people huddle in their beds,
And grandmas are sewing
And the wind in the trees makes a musical note,
When toes are numb,
When soup is boiling, and
While mother is making supper,
Everyone is having fun.

Tanya attempted a multi-sensory picture of winter in one of her stanzas:

The children build snowmen taller than they are.
The children throw snowballs at each other,
Going in, running out, going round and round,
Dancing to the music they pretend to hear.

Her last line made me especially aware of the imagination and resourcefulness of children. I could introduce them to Shakespeare, get them excited about writing

winter poems, and suggest a poetic form to follow, but the imagery and expression were uniquely their own. Often, amid lines which are commonplace and cliche-ridden, I found a line or a phrase which shone. Kevin's two lines are among these:

> When I wake up in our old house,
> I feel the cold flirting around.

I left the fourth grade classroom that morning with a stack of poems, some good, others mediocre, yet all of them in some way wonderful. The children felt that they had made an acquaintance with William Shakespeare, and they shared something in common with him. The classroom teacher reported later that their favorite word was "doth," and they used it extensively on the playground to impress the children in the lower grades!

From this experience, I came to a number of important conclusions:

1) Shakespeare can be introduced to children in the elementary school.
2) Traditional poetry can help children understand form and introduce poetic topics.
3) Traditional poetry does not stifle children's creativity, but rather it can be a means of sparking and releasing their creative potential.

What's That There in Your Crystal Ball? Using Journals to Make Predictions

Katie Wood
University of South Carolina

I remember that as a child, I was fascinated with crystal balls. The old "gypsy" at the school Halloween carnival got three of my quarters in one evening to tell my future in her cheap, dime-store sphere. Many a glass jar or vase was filled with colored water in my own vain attempt to make predictions for anyone who would listen. These childhood fantasies have blossomed into an adult preoccupation with the future. I think. I plan. I scheme. I anticipate the thought of what lies before me. And then I forge ahead, probing the darkness, determined not to let the future sneak up on me!

As a teacher, I suppose it was only natural that much of my curriculum emerged from my own desire for my students to look into their own "crystal balls" and evaluate what they saw there. I wanted them to understand that much of their future was within their control; that by analyzing the past and the present, they could make reliable predictions about what lies ahead. And like many in education, I talked a good game when it came to "future skills" like informed decision making and higher order thinking. I was giving them the tools they needed for the future, but these tools were cumbersome and laborious until we made the electric connection with literature. From that moment on, we had power tools!

Like many great inventions, I happened upon this energy source quite by accident. As a language arts teacher, I was well informed of the power of writing-to-learn. Room 114 was always stocked with the obligatory journals, filled with students' reflections about stories, events, and life in general. But it wasn't until we began using the journals to predict, as well as reflect, that I realized how powerful a tool writing-to-learn could be.

The first time we did written predictions, I began by sharing with my students my feelings about being able to see the future. As seventh graders are apt to do, they had many stories to tell of their own fascinations with the "supernatural." We approached our look into the future with enthusiasm. They liked the idea because they knew they couldn't give a wrong answer.

When we found ourselves at a critical point in a class novel, I had the students predict what they thought was going to happen. It was a great way to grasp hold of some principles of literary analysis like setting, characterization, plot and theme. The requirement was that every prediction must have a valid line of reasoning behind it based on story elements we'd already encountered in the book. The students made the decision not to share their predictions until after we had finished the novel. The ensuing discussion that wait made possible was at the very least serendipitous. We spent two days analyzing our predictions in light of what happened in the story. Similarities were noted, ideas challenged and defended, and at times the authority of the author and his text were even brought into question! The promise of the activity was exciting, but I still had not made the crucial connection.

I thought about what took place on those three days in October, and I realized that the discussion my class and I had was a verbal type of reflection. How much more powerful, I thought, would the whole process be if I had students do written reflections on their individual predictions. The result was a prediction/reflection journal that became the staple of our reading and writing curriculum.

Within weeks, I could see marked improvement in my students' abilities to analyze settings, characters, and plots in their quest for the perfect prediction. In the brighter students' journals, I saw an attempt to understand emerging themes and character motives as a way of coming to conclusions. The task became a very serious one. "Cheating"--changing a prediction to fit an outcome--was the ultimate transgression, and I had many keepers of the faith who would inform me of any wrongdoing!

The prediction/reflection process was at full scale in March when we read Mildred Taylor's *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry*. The story of young Cassie, a black child in rural Mississippi in the 30's, is one with which middle school students experience great empathy. Cassie and her brothers and sisters are wonderfully drawn characters, and the difficulties they meet through the plot draw the reader into a tight web of mixed emotions. The setting becomes absolutely crucial to the story. As we approached the decisive Chapter 11, I sensed the anxiety of my students as I asked them to predict what would happen. They didn't want to face the reality of what they knew their predictions must show. Desperately they sought ways to make everyone live happily ever after, but the ugly hate of prejudice stared back at them from the pages we had read. On this day, we worked in silence.

It was through the experience with this novel that I came to understand that the literary skills we had worked so hard to refine would translate easily to the settings, characters, and plots of our real everyday lives. If I truly was interested in making my students "future thinkers," why did I need to limit them to the fictional world of books? I wondered if my students could learn to predict their own futures with as much accuracy as they had the fictional characters we'd encountered. It was certainly worth a try.

I proposed the idea to my students, and they were excited about the possibility. Together we worked to establish and then refine the process of predicting events in our own lives. We started with something we all had in common, an upcoming nine-weeks test. At the end of a review session the day before the test, students wrote their predictions of how they would do. To apply the valid line of reasoning rule, they analyzed their efforts during the previous quarter, made judgments about the difficulty of the material to be covered, and evaluated their own test-taking abilities. During the process, the students made a startling discovery. There was one variable they had complete control over that would affect the outcome of the test: the amount of study they would do that night! In an effort to outdo each other, they made commitments of four, five, and even ten hours of study to earn the A+ they wanted to predict. Needless to say, we went to the test with high expectations. But more importantly, we came out with the best test performances of the year! I'm sure I did nothing short of glow when I returned that set of papers.

Our reflections on the testing predictions helped us to begin to realize the power we had created by using this process in our own lives. Almost unanimously, students came to the conclusion that they studied harder to ensure

the test outcome would match their prediction. It took a little nudging on my part to make them see how this could be used effectively in many areas of their lives. The issue was to get them to understand that we have tremendous control over many variables in our lives. It isn't a responsibility we always want to take. It's much easier to beg off with excuses about how circumstances were "out of our hands," especially if our hands are thirteen years old. The power, however, remains.

Think about the degree of certainty with which you can predict what you will do or what will happen to you tomorrow. It's a very practical kind of ESP that we all possess. We can see the future, and we do it all the time. Making plans is the perfect example: If you and I schedule a meeting tomorrow for two o'clock, the chances are remarkably high that we will indeed meet at the appointed hour. As a good future teller, I will do everything I can to see that my "prediction" of meeting you comes true. I can manipulate the "setting" so I am available at that time. I can ask another "character" in the story, my secretary maybe, to remind me of our date, and I can pen the "plot" in my appointment book to ensure the outcome is a happy ending. My students and I learned that we were the authors of our own life stories, and we had to do all we could to write best-sellers.

Studying full time over the last few months, I have often thought about ways to expand the prediction/reflection journal for use in other content areas. Many schools already have writing-across-the-curriculum working for their students. All that is needed is for teachers to realize, as my students and I did, the power of prediction, and then be willing to stop long enough to let students think about the future.

Any teacher could allow students the opportunity to predict performance on tests and other class activities. Many science experiments could be stopped long enough for students to piece together a probable outcome. Mathematics students learning a new method might predict following steps or final answers. Athletes and musicians might predict their own performances, or artists their next great work. And perhaps most powerfully, students of history might read or watch the news and predict outcomes for world events as they happen.

I am confident that any teacher could find at least two opportunities a week to let her students predict the future and later reflect on those predictions. How easy it would be to implement such a program in an entire system! No special skills or specific content area knowledge is needed. No district guidelines would have to be drawn. The only requirement is that teachers believe in the power of the process of prediction and reflection and have a simple dedication to making students better able to control their own destinies.

I have found much inspiration for my ideas while reading some of the educational classics--Alvin Toffler's *Learning for Tomorrow* (1974) and Neil Postman and Charles Weingartner's *Teaching as a Subversive Activity* (1969). Toffler says that "all education springs from some image of the future." From schooling's earliest roots this idea has been true. Educational philosophers have always given us rather precise visions of the kinds of men and women schools should make of little boys and girls. Ancient Greeks wanted intellectual decision makers and enlightened future leaders while their Roman counterparts were more interested in making men into soldiers. Scholastics like Thomas Aquinas wanted to produce moral thinkers who easily combined faith with reason. And in our own educational story are written such characters as Benjamin Rush who saw

schooling as a way to make men into "Republican machines." Now, as this more mature nation heads toward the twenty-first century, philosophers and laymen alike struggle with a vision for our youth, with knowing what men and women of the future will need to succeed, or even just get by.

We are living in the first generation for which the assumption that the present and the future will be much the same as the past is false (Postman and Weingartner). The knowledge explosion of this century has made our world a place of rapid change. Even change has changed because of the sheer speed at which it now occurs (Postman and Weingartner). And yet in many ways our schools continue to operate with the tacit notion that tomorrow's world will be basically familiar--the present writ large (Toffler). As a result, we do the best we can to keep up, tread fearlessly where no teachers have gone before, and daily fall short of adequately preparing our students for the certain, uncertain future. There has never been a better time than now to turn our attention to equipping ourselves for whatever might lie ahead. The way I see it, we have two choices. We can peer into the vase filled with colored water and hope for the best, or we can begin to shift our curriculum focus to the future. The prediction/reflection journal was a wonderful place for my students and me to start.

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The University English Professor in the High School English Classroom

Stanley Rich
University of South Carolina at Aiken

How can colleges and universities work with the public schools on a cooperative basis to encourage and to improve the teaching of the humanities in the secondary schools? One experiment in linking schools and colleges has recently taken place in South Carolina where the University of South Carolina at Aiken has engaged in a year-long project. Called the Scholar-in-Residence program, this endeavor places a college English teacher in four different high schools for the fall semester and a college history teacher in four other area high schools for the spring semester. Based upon a program sponsored earlier by four colleges and the public schools of Charleston, SC, this program has been tailored to the resources of USC at Aiken and the needs of eight high schools within a twenty-five mile radius of the college. This $12,000 project has been funded by the South Carolina Humanities Council. The grant monies are used to release the college professors full-time for a semester each and to provide the salaries for part-time college faculty replacements.

The program has been implemented on the basis of seven goals:

1. To raise the general awareness of the value of the humanities for high school students, teachers, and parents;
2. To strengthen the relationship between the college and the area school districts;
3. To utilize more fully the resources in the community: the people, the services, and the materials available;
4. To promote good public relations between the educational community and the parents of students involved with the program;
5. To heighten awareness of students regarding a college-level mode of scholarship;
6. To encourage collegial exchanges between and among college and school teachers for scholarly and professional growth;
7. To provide alternate opportunities for school teachers to earn recertification credits.

Since one of the primary goals of the program is to encourage increased cooperation among school and college personnel, the planning involved many people from various teaching and administrative levels in order to initiate the project. A brief history of that planning process follows. First, the USC-Aiken Dean of the College of Humanities and the Chair of the School of Education met with the School District Superintendents and the Directors of Instruction to determine interest and commitment to the basic concepts of the program. Next, following a statewide meeting in Charleston, SC, to learn about the Charleston School District program, a joint meeting of college and school district representatives was held at USC-Aiken. School district Directors of Instruction then met with the district school teachers of English and history to introduce the concepts of the program and to determine the particular needs of the district. After fielding a questionnaire to facilitate teachers' input, the needs assessment

data were incorporated in the grant proposal. Throughout the process, both college and school personnel continued to emphasize the need for this to be a cooperative, mutual endeavor--and it continued to be so in the implementation of the program.

After the project was funded, one of the most crucial aspects of the program took place. That was a two-day planning retreat held at a conference center near Aiken. In early May, more than twenty people involved directly with the program spent an intensive two days planning and organizing the specifics of the program: The eight host teachers from the schools met with the two college scholars, one in English and one in history, and scheduled specific dates and topics for eight residencies of two and a half weeks each. In August, two weeks after the public school year had begun, I, as the English scholar, began the first of my four residencies in the public schools, at Aiken High School. In late January, as the spring semester was beginning, the history scholar began his semester-long residence.

As the English Scholar-in-Residence, what kinds of activities did I undertake in the public schools? Prior to the planning retreat, I had given to each of the teachers I would be working with a list of topics that I could offer to their classes. With careful negotiation and mutual agreement, we settled upon specific topics appropriate for the classes and the time of the semester when I would be in residence at each school. In each school I worked for four days every week with a host class, that group being an Advanced Placement class or a class of advanced students. Some of the subjects for those host classes included *Oedipus Rex*, irony and parody in poetry, the English sonnet form, the metaphysical poetry of John Donne, Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, writing about poetry, Keats' "Ode on a Grecian Urn," Matthew Arnold's "Dover Beach," a brief introduction to classical mythology, Martin Luther King's "Letter from the Birmingham Jail," and the syntax of basic English sentence patterns. For each of these host classes, I assigned an essay and marked it in the manner of a college teacher. At other hours during the day, I was available to talk with the students about their lessons and other relevant issues, such as issues regarding attending college.

Since this program was designed not to be elitist in concept or in deed, I worked with a second class each day. While the host class was a twelfth-grade advanced group, the others were spread throughout grades nine to twelve and involved basic, standard, and advanced groupings. So, on one day I might have taught a ninth-grade basic English class something about how to read an expository essay, and the next day I might have taught an eleventh-grade standard class how the humanities can integrate myth, painting, and poetry, using the example of the myth of Daedalus and Icarus and W. H. Auden's poem "Musee des Beaux Arts." Topics for other one-hour presentations included the following: using the English dictionary, reading a short story such as Eudora Welty's "The Worn Path," presenting a slide show to increase the students' powers of observation, lecturing on American English dialects, reading in Middle English passages from Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, and discussing irony and satire in poetry. Much planning went into scheduling these one-hour appearances--so that the presentations would fit as much as possible into each teacher's own planned goals and activities. In this manner, the scholar's presence would enhance the education experience for the students.

In addition to the two hours of classroom teaching each day, I was engaged in other assignments. At each school I presented for both students and parents an evening program entitled "Everything You Always Wanted to Know About College But Were Afraid to Ask." At one school, this event brought out over 120 enthusiastic people on a "dark and stormy night." At another school in a rural setting, more than 100 students, teachers, and parents appeared to learn more about attending college. For each school, I also held an in-service program for the faculty. These programs included a slide presentation on the English Lake District and Lake Poets, a workshop on freewriting in the classroom, and a workshop on "Where English Words Come From." In addition to being available to talk with the teachers about their curricular and pedagogical concerns, I also met with the librarians at each school to review their holdings in English language and literature and made suggestions on how to improve the collection.

Such a total immersion in the life and activities of the schools gave me a greater appreciation for and understanding of the daily "real life" of public school teachers, and I hope that in some ways I have been able to encourage both students, teachers, and administrators in the schools to engage in further study of the humanities. One of the signs of the success of the Scholar-in-Residence program is that many of the teachers have asked me to return to present other workshops and to return to give guest lectures in the classes where I taught. Several of the teachers noted that they too had a greater sense of professionalism during both the planning and the implementation of the residencies.

This fairly low-cost program has been eminently successful and beneficial in two important areas: Collegial relationships between the university and the area school districts have been strengthened, and the general awareness of the value of the humanities has been raised for high school students, teachers, parents, and the larger community.

Against "Excellence": An Approach to Teaching Creative Writing

David Starkey
Francis Marion University

Most of the students I teach at Francis Marion University who have enrolled in my beginning and advanced poetry workshops have no intention of making a career of poetry. In fact, in a program-wide survey, we discovered that fewer than one in ten of our students had any desire to enroll in an M.F.A. program. And even these students, many of whom will be the first in their families to finish college, expressed serious doubts about the financial feasibility of attending graduate school.

Obviously, it would be misguided for us conduct our creative writing program in the same manner as a department which is preparing its students to enter the labyrinth of the "professional" literary world. The priority at small universities like FMU--and, to an even greater extent, at secondary schools--ought, instead, to be sensitivity to the motivations beginning writers have for joining our classes in the first place. It has been my experience that students at Francis Marion enroll in my poetry workshops for one or both of the following reasons: They are looking for what they think will be an easy course to fill out their schedules, and/or they like to write. Clearly, the former reason is inadequate, but our assignments and attitudes can soon enough convince these students that some real labor will be required if they are to complete the course. For this type of student, mystery writer John D. MacDonald's advice is sound: "Give them a taste of the hard work involved, a good dose of discipline, and a framework of procedures" (86). The student who has enrolled on a lark probably has fewer prejudices about what constitutes a good piece of creative writing; she is often quickest to benefit from the remarks of teacher and class, and the soonest to experiment in her work. Frequently these students turn out to be treasures, writing about subjects like science, history, even economics, that English majors usually ignore.

Ironically, the latter group of students, those who are genuinely interested in the subject, may present a more challenging problem. Precisely because they have already formed an image of themselves as creative writers, students with some previous experience are often more resistant to constructive criticism. Here I would disagree with MacDonald, who argues that "you can't [teach] while being 'nice.' You have to put them under stress because that's where the learning happens" (87). The truth is, if a beginning writer's fragile identity is damaged, she may become excessively defiant or hyper-critical of her own work. Wendy Bishop has rightly maintained that "becoming a creative writer is an act of personal commitment" (viii); especially in the early stages, confrontation more often undermines than strengthens that commitment.

When creative writing workshops became a feature of American English departments in the 1950s, the idea was that professional authors would come to the university to share their insights with the generation of writers who would go on to take their places. However, with the proliferation of writing programs, some

several hundred now, the original reason for teaching creative writing is no longer tenable. Even if all the thousands of students were excellent--obviously, they are not--there would be no room for them in the rapidly shrinking literary marketplace. Like myself, the majority of younger creative writing teachers in the university today were trained in M.F.A. programs. Our teachers tried to turn us into "real writers," careful craftspersons as much as raw talents. Conscientiously, we demand that young people, who are not yet fully adults and who may never again take another creative writing course, aspire to become the luminaries we admire. Yet the great majority of our students do not want to be famous. They simply want to express themselves. In our fight to become legitimate and permanent members of the English Department, creative writing teachers may very well be draining our classes of the sense of play so crucial to the writing process.

A powerful example of this predicament is illustrated by Mimi Schwartz, an English professor whose writing had been mostly academic. When she returned to college to take creative writing classes, she was surprised by "the astonishing power of response to either encourage or undermine creative risk-taking" (196). Schwartz noted the potency of peer and teacher response "and its potential danger, especially when the writer feels insecure, which is the way most student writers feel--for most readers, even skilled ones, react only to what's on the page" (197). She goes on to argue that a positive oral and written response is the best incentive a beginning writer has to continue with her work.

In many cases, the flash point occurs when the student's writing is brought before the group in a workshop. The first semester I taught poetry writing, I encountered a beginning writer who reacted very negatively to anything but praise. A straight "A" student and member of the student council, "Jim" made many perceptive comments about the other writers' poems, but when his own turn came, his reading was both nervous and arrogant--his voice quavering yet unmistakably proud. Jim's poetry was prosodically better than many of the poems that had come before, but his diction was flowery and archaic, many of the figures were cliche. I felt it was my duty to expose these weaknesses so that Jim's writing could improve and so others wouldn't fall into the same trap. I began, of course, by praising the evident strengths of the poems, but when I tried to turn the discussion to sharpening the work, Jim--despite our "gag order"--kept interrupting student comments to defend his work. In subsequent workshops, I was able to keep Jim quiet, but every teacher knows that a rolling of the eyes and long sigh from a student writer can cut off dialogue as quickly as any verbal protestations.

I was unable to solve what I came to think of as "The Jim Problem," and the results were unhappy. By the end of the semester he hovered like an angry vulture over our workshops. I doubt Jim ever intended to become the great defender of melodrama and sentimental love, but that was the role he played in our class. On those few days when he was absent, it became blatant that his presence was an impasse to our open exchange of ideas. I felt almost giddy knowing I could suggest alternatives to tired phrases without being told by Jim that "poetic language" was perfectly all right.

After several years teaching the class, I now realize that as soon as I recognized a conflict developing between Jim and myself, I should have emphasized in an individual conference (as I do now with students similar to Jim) that our relationship ought not to be antagonistic, that our differing opinions ought to serve as counterbalances rather than warring cannons. Too, I would have more

thoroughly discussed the assumptions on which the student's judgments were based and explicitly defined my own. Most students, when they are forced to examine the sources of their own bias, usually modify their more strident views. To try to diffuse the tension, I would also have been much quicker to address the dissident student's opinions in class. Finally, though, knowing how transient the majority of influences are, I would have reconciled myself to Jim's position and stopped worrying about it. In large part, it was my own dogged insistence on making a potentially talented student into a professional writer that caused our confrontation to drag on.

A more complex and frustrating dilemma is presented by students who take our advice too close to heart. A woman in her early sixties I'll call Irene had been writing poetry for years. Earnest as her efforts were, her poetry exhibited all the generalizations, platitudes and colorless word choice so abundant in the work of most beginning writers. Unfortunately, I hadn't gauged the depth of Irene's sensitivity to my criticism. Though the workshop had been respectful, Irene looked distressed throughout. Before she left the class I tried to emphasize that all work can benefit from revision and that the class's suggestions were only friendly recommendations. Several days later Irene came to me with revised versions of her poems. They were a mishmash of half-heard workshop suggestions and negative platitudes she evidently thought I would approve. As we went over the poems line-by-line Irene frowned, her face working, trying to discover what it was I wanted.

The semester was a perplexing one for both of us. Despite a litany of troubles in her life, Irene was supremely optimistic, and her idea of poetry was indelibly marked by greeting card and gift shop verse. But when she attempted to fuse this nearly separate genre with the more serious poetry I was asking her to write, she produced a creature that could neither walk nor fly. While I still endeavor to steer students away from the sort of writing I think does not merit time in a workshop, I have learned that it is sometimes more harmful for a student--both as a writer and as a person--to compose on a "higher" level than she chooses. When it becomes clear by midterm that a beginning writer cannot jettison the prejudices she brings to the class, I think we ought to allow her to develop within the boundaries she sets for herself. We need to appreciate--no matter how difficult it is for us--what that student is trying to do.

While it would be lazy and dishonest to coddle our students, it is just as pernicious to force them to become the sort of writers we think they ought to be. The less mature the student, the more freedom she should have to explore creative writing on her own terms. We can offer advice, we can point out what we think are missteps, we can even reprimand them if we believe they are disrupting the flow of the workshop. However--unless we are specifically preparing them to become professionals--in the end we must leave students to what they think is best. Their writing may be inadequate by our standards, their concept of "excellence" may be drastically different, but the work they are creating is at the very least something important to them, something they can claim as their own.

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At the End: Moving Towards Reading and Writing Integration in High School Language Arts

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Integrating reading and writing instruction has gained tremendous momentum as both a research topic and as an instructional procedure over the last decade. Researchers' and educators' understandings of the relationship between the two is still in its developmental stages, yet applying reading and writing integration has become an integral part of many primary, elementary, and middle school language arts programs.

Nancy Atwell's *In the Middle* (1987) provides teachers of students from first through eighth grades practical, effective, and manageable strategies for integrating reading and writing. Yet--whether due to curriculum restraints or a variety of undetermined roadblocks--reading and writing instruction in secondary language arts flounders in the dichotomous past. With slight adaptations, Atwell's workshop approach to integrating reading and writing is applicable and effective in the secondary classroom.

In her *The Connection of Writing to Reading and its Effect on Reading Comprehension* (1985), Sarah S. Whyte details the evolution of research supporting the effectiveness of integrating reading and writing. She notes that as early as 1912, Baker and Thorndike "found reading and writing to be simbiotic [sic]" (4). A number of separate studies from the late sixties through the seventies (Barbig and La Campagne, 1968; Zeman, 1969; Evanechko, Ollila, and Armstrong, 1974; Heil, 1976; Grobe and Grobe, 1977; Kroll, 1977; Falk and Hayes, 1979, 1980) support that superior reading and superior writing are clearly related and that improvement in one often translates into improvement in the other (Whyte 4-5). Whyte adds: "That good readers become good writers (and vice versa) was again emphasized in the 1980's when a new type of study emerged, observing reading and writing behavior during the act of reading and writing" (5). In the eighties, researchers (Miller, 1983; Bissex, 1980 1981; Perl, 1980; Atwell, 1981; Birnbaum, 1982; Graves and Murray, 1983; Calkins, 1983; Baghban, 1984) identified specific patterns and skills that justify pursuing reading and writing integration (Whyte 5),

Next, as in Mary F. Heller's *How Reading and Writing Are Related: From Theory to Practice* (1991), researchers and educators have accepted that reading and writing integration is "efficient and effective in our classroom instruction, across all grade levels and content areas" (1-2). Heller notes that both readers and writers need "script knowledge," "knowledge and understanding of text structure," and "knowledge and understanding of text genre, or form" (8-9). She also refers to "James Squire's (1983) model of how reading and writing are related." She explains, "Both readers and writers are involved in similar, if not identical thought processes during . . . comprehending and composing (Squire, 1983)" (11). Readers and writers are "actively involved both intellectually and emotionally in

reconstructing the author's meaning [reading]" and "in constructing meaning [writing]," Heller notes (11). She offers two other connections as well. She explains that "reflective thought is important to both reading and writing processes" and that reading and writing are social--"our shared need to be literate people" (12-13). Secondary language arts must implement such research and discard the traditional division between grammar (of which writing is often a subset) and literature.

Timothy Shanahan's first chapter, "Reading and Writing Together: What Does it Really Mean?" in *Reading and Writing Together: New Perspectives for the Classroom* (1990) offers additional research on integration, but adds a discussion of the significance of implementing reading and writing for all language arts teachers. Shanahan believes integration fosters better readers and writers; it teaches reading and writing more efficiently as "teaching them [reading and writing] together can require less instructional time and effort"; it "extend[s] and deepen[s] awareness and control of the knowledge and processes of written language"; and it allows "'double practice'" that "should be linked" (3-4). His argument for integration goes beyond the cold facts of research: "We must teach children to use reading and writing in concert in powerful ways that extend their abilities to accomplish their goals and solve their problems," and ultimately, "we can make better the lives of the children" (5).

Integration has not only aided the students but also the educators. Shanahan feels "the most obvious educational changes brought about by reading-writing relationship views have been improvements in instructional methods or techniques" (7). Such changes, he specifies, are

> invented spelling (Clark, 1989), language experience approach (Stauffer, 1980), use of pattern books (Cramer and Cramer, 1975), story grammar activities . . ., process discussions (Graves, 1983), DRTA's (Stauffer, 1980), reader's logs, probable passages (Wood, 1984), open-ended workbook pages that stress writing for emphasizing reading skills (Scheu, Tanner and Au, 1989), [and] book publishing (D'Angelo, Korba & Woodworth, 1981). . . . (9)

These instructional approaches have grown from the understanding that "reading and writing require knowledge of many of the same features of written language," specifically "letter sound relations, print format, vocabulary, and syntax," Shanahan explains (8). As well, he notes that reading and writing "depend upon many of the same cognitive processes," as with "purpose-setting, self-awareness of success, use of different sources of information, and so on" (8). The result is a focus on a total understanding of language as communication. Shanahan adds,

> In a classroom designed to stress the communicative aspects of reading and writing one would expect to see more evidence of classroom mail services, the reading of multiple books by the same authors, authorship (Lamme, 1989), discussions of author intentions, dialogue journals (Gambrell, 1985), author's chair activities (Graves and Hansen, 1983), and the like. Such activities are valued from a reading-writing perspective, not because they

> provide additional practice, but because they offer children a unique opportunity for using literacy in social ways that consider the needs, perspectives and values of others. (13)

For secondary language arts teachers, Shanahan's message is certainly applicable. He concludes by justifying reading and writing integration as "child-centered" and with asserting "few activities foster as much self-awareness as reading and writing" (14-15). Shanahan also opens the door for secondary language arts to adopt reading and writing integration by noting that applying integration "does not mean that a teacher should never select a story or require that a particular novel be read, or even that a teacher should not assign written topics" (16). In short, reading and writing integration is the most effective--though not the only--instructional procedure for the teachers and the students, and it needs to be adopted as the central philosophy of programs that use a variety of instructional strategies.

After understanding the interconnectedness of reading and writing, after accepting the effectiveness and efficiency of integration, secondary language arts teachers must face actually implementing such practices. Although it is not applicable in its pure form in high school English classes, Atwell's *In the Middle* is indispensable as a primer for understanding the essentials of practicing reading and writing integration. She reveals actual strategies for establishing reading and writing workshops. Most importantly, she offers her central concept: "Like writers in the writing workshop, all readers--all learners--need Mary Ellen Giacobbe's three basics of time, ownership, and response" (156). In short, students must have adequate time to read and write (and to re-read and rewrite); they must have some degree of choice in what they read and write; and they must respond to each other and with the teacher about what they read and write. Such are the tenets of practicing workshops.

Next, teachers must assess the obstacles that will impede applying workshops. In most high schools, classes are guided by curriculum guides--which mandate reading lists and types and amount of grammar to cover--and state requirements--Basic Skills in South Carolina and required literature for certain grades, American literature in eleventh and British literature in twelfth. Ideally, curriculum guides and state requirements will be amended with integration in mind, allowing time, ownership, and response; but until then, teachers will have to adapt the philosophy into the existing system.

Although not specifically aimed at secondary classes, Lea M. McGee and Donald J. Richgel offer "five characteristics of effective learning strategies" integrating reading and writing (166). They stress that learning strategies should include as many of the following as possible: "(1) promoting critical understanding, (2) using revision, (3) promoting students' use of prior knowledge, (4) involving students personally, and (5) promoting students' responding with their feelings" (160). They also provide specific instructional procedures for each criteria (149-61). With McGee and Richgel's criteria in mind, high school teachers can implement reading and writing workshops by allowing varying degrees of choice in reading and writing assignments, a less structured time limitation for completion of projects, and a dialogue journal/mini-lesson approach to direct instruction.

For a writing workshop, teachers should share responsibility for topics. The teacher can assign the type of works--persuasive, narrative, expository, descriptive--until all students have been exposed to all required forms, then allow the students to choose the content. During a unit on Emerson and Thoreau, the teacher can let students use "Civil Disobedience," for example, as a model and motivation for students' own persuasive essays--which may range from direct essays supporting or rebuking Thoreau to a call for more senior privileges. The teacher can provide mini-lessons on both Emerson's and Thoreau's works as the discussions guide them, along with mini-lessons on the writing problems and strengths exposed by the essays. After all types of writing required by the curriculum guide and state guidelines are covered in a year, the teacher is free to allow students full choice, probably occurring later in the year when the students are best able to handle the freedom. The efficiency of the workshop method, utilizing mini-lessons, is derived from the focus on student interests and needs. Presenting everything to every student every year is ineffective and uninteresting for the students and teachers.

Most important to adopting a writing workshop in secondary language arts classrooms is allowing students more time to complete and rewrite assignments; by allowing more time, the teacher also makes response more practical. Like professional writers, students need weeks and many rewrites to complete a competent draft, and during those drafts, students should be sharing and responding to each other's works and with the teacher. As well, students must be treated as writers to become writers. For instance, even the greatest writers do not produce perfect writing every time they write; even the greatest writers do not excel in all forms of writing; even the greatest writers occasionally cannot produce a piece by tomorrow. So why should we expect such all the time from students, young people just learning to write? Atwell uses journals and letters for responses to writing assignments, and she is flexible about the number of assignments students complete, but the philosophy of time, ownership, and response is more important than the specific course requirements each teacher feels comfortable with assigning.

Peer-editing and revision must be accepted by secondary teachers as primary tools for learning--especially since the traditional red-pen method has proven time and again not to affect positively the ability of students to write well. Workshops produce writers; assigning an essay, grading it with a large red "D," then having the student place the paper in a folder produces a static, vapid process that can foster only negative results. Also, a writing workshop gives students a purpose. They choose their topics and are evaluated by peers and the teacher while they have had the opportunity to compare their own works among themselves. Students may discover they are much better writers than they previously thought, or they may come to realize they do need improvement and, most importantly, will be given the time and guidance needed to learn and to grow as writers and thinkers. Great writers from Tolstoy to John Gardner were afforded the basics of time, ownership, and response; our secondary students deserve at least as much.

The reading workshop approach faces its greatest challenge in high school English classes. Curriculum guides often mandate specific works to be covered each year in literature; such precludes two of the components of the workshop--time and ownership. Secondary language arts teachers must take a

stand concerning the restructuring of reading curriculum guides. We must ask ourselves if reading as a skill and as a worthwhile pursuit is more important than specific works of literature, and if it is (and I think it is, though a focus on reading does not necessarily preclude literature, whereas the traditional focus on literature often does squelch students' desire to read), we must cast aside mandatory reading of Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* for all tenth graders throughout the U. S., throughout modern history, and help students learn to read well and to love reading so they become more likely to choose to read *Julius Caesar* on their own. When responding through journals to students about their readings, teachers may still recommend the classics, and teachers may still teach certain classic novels to the entire class, but students must be allowed ample time and choice to discover the importance of reading for themselves, to discover authors and novels they love. When a twelfth grader chooses to read a book, enjoys the work, and then writes a journal entry to four other students recommending the book, the workshop method has already far outdistanced the traditional classroom where teachers assign works that are never read except in Cliffs Notes form.

Atwell found that allowing students to choose what they wanted to read did not signal the demise of the classics. Many students chose classics from her crowded shelves of paperbacks, and many accepted her recommendations--as not only a teacher, but also as a fellow reader and lover of books--of classic works. Again, as pointed out by Shanahan earlier, traditional works and practices do not have to be thrown out completely, but the workshop method must become the crux of the program, the heart of the instructional strategies that allow students to learn to become better and eager readers and writers.

Secondary language arts teachers, along with all educators, must come to accept reading and writing integration through workshops as the effective system that it is. The research and real-world applications have shown that integration fosters better readers, better writers, and, most importantly, better young people than the traditional dichotomy found in many classrooms beyond the ninth grade.

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PUTTING CORRECTNESS IN ITS PROPER PLACE

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After the Civil War, American colleges faced a growing, upwardly mobile student body, pursuing practical training desired by business and industry. In the 1890s Harvard's Committee on Composition, men not part of the college, reported about composition instruction, about which they lacked training and experience. Charles Francis Adams, E. L. Godkin, and Josiah Quincy examined English students' essays about preparatory school education, as well as college entrance examinations. The Committee noticed surface features--grammar, spelling, and usage errors--imparting that teaching writing concerned instruction in correctness. Composition textbooks reinforced this notion by concentrating on usage and grammar. Such influences have extended long into the present century (Berlin 58-61; Stewart 17).

When correctness has been foremost in writing instruction, the focus has been on grammar, not, to quote Mike Rose, "the intricacies, idiosyncracies, and rich complexities of composing" (88). Yet Richard Braddock, Richard Lloyd-Jones, and Lowell Schoer's important *Research in Written Composition* (North 17) unequivocably states that "the teaching of formal grammar has a negligible or, because it usually displaces some instruction and practice in actual composition, even a harmful effect on the improvement of writing" (37- 38). Other reports on how grammar study affects composition agree (Hartwell 105-06).

If, therefore, we should not place correctness foremost in the teaching of writing, where should we place it? The English faculty at one college give as "priorities in any piece of writing . . . substance, organization, style, and correctness" (Akin). This order is consistent with composition specialists' books about writing and with research on experienced writers' processes. This order is violated, however, in novice writers' processes. Also, according to the same faculty, grammar, usage, and mechanics "are best learned individually through reading, writing, and revision" (Akin). Compositon pedagogy may reflect both of these positions: that correctness be a writer's last priority and that students learn correctness contextually.

Peter Elbow's *Writing Without Teachers* and Donald Murray's *A Writer Teaches Writing* exemplify books placing correctness as a last priority. Elbow asserts:

> . . .don't let a concern about grammar hinder your efforts to improve your writing. Don't make a special effort on grammar until you are already comfortable and much more competent in your writing. In the meantime treat grammar as a matter of very late editorial correcting: never think about it while you are writing. Pretend you have an editor who will fix everything for you; then don't hire yourself for this job till the very end . . . . (137)

Elbow blames incoherent writing not on errors, but on premature attention to error. He says that grammar has been included in writing instruction because "it is the one part of writing that can be straightforwardly taught" (138).

Murray also postpones concern about correctness until late in a writer's process. He includes a checklist for a writer's last activity, "Edit to publish." The final points relate to correctness:

> Are the traditions of language broken only if it clarifies meaning?
> Do the mechanics of language help make the meaning clear?
> Is each word spelled correctly?
> Is the manuscript neat? (63)

Murray also notes that drafting and rereading involve grammar, as does peer-editing. "We should know the traditions of our language," Murray says, "but they are best learned within the context of making writing" (238-39).

Elbow's and Murray's suggestions that a writer attend to correctness late in the process conforms to research about experienced writers' practices. For instance, Nancy Sommers studied revisions of "twenty experienced adult writers . . . journalists, editors, and academics" (121). Their first revisions concentrated on their topics and ideas, rather than on word choice, which might have limited them. Alluding to a power failure in New York, one participant explained:

> I feel like Con Edison cutting off certain states to keep the generators going. In first and second drafts, I try to cut off as much as I can of my editing generator, and in the third draft, I try to cut off some of my idea generators, so I can make sure that I will actually finish the essay. (127)

According to Linda Flower and John R. Hayes, writing discovery drafts and editing later characterize sophisticated writers with "flexible process goals" ("A Cognitive Process Theory" 380-81). Also, six professional writers compared with six competent adult writers wrote longer sentence parts before pausing to plan and to review (Kaufer, Hayes, and Flower 122, 126-27).

In contrast, novice writers focus on correctness prematurely, with unsatisfactory results (Harris 77; Perl 328; Rose 3-4; Sommers 124). For instance, Sondra Perl's unskilled college writers edited in the midst of drafting, after drafting preliminary texts, and during their final reading (331). Their editing interfered with generating and drafting and tied them to the written text. Perl concludes that these writers needed "a conception of editing that includes flexibility, suspended judgment, the weighing of possibilities, and the reworking of ideas" (333). Blocked writers edit too soon, Rose notes, and apply arbitrary, irrelevant, or faulty rules (4). Perl's students also mistakenly invoked rules, resulting in hypercorrection or unintended lack of clarity. Perl attributes students' disruptive editing, rather than elaboration, early in the process to classroom instruction about surface features (332-34).

How does one apply this research to teaching writing? First, one may educate students about writers' processes. In addition to textbook explanation, I discuss the writing activities on the next page with students. In English 101 and in business communications classes, I also show a videotape of a writer composing

aloud. This videotape illustrates the writer's processes, which my classes critique and compare with their own. In addition, I explicitly teach invention techniques and require relevant ones before students draft.

A LIST OF WRITING ACTIVITIES

In class I present writing processes slightly differently from Linda Flower and John R. Hayes[1]. On a blackboard I list the following activities in which a writer may engage:

WRITING ACTIVITIES

Prewriting or Predrafting	Writing or Drafting	Rewriting or Redrafting
Considering constraints (influences)	Writing words that are part of a text	Rereading
Purpose		Evaluating
Message		Revising
Medium		(Making substantive changes
Audience	<---------->	[through adding, deleting, or
Context (Situational Background)	Recursion	rearranging] in the whole text, a
Generating ideas	(Moving among	section or a
Organizing	kinds of activities)	paragraph)
	<---------->	Editing
		(Correcting errors at the sentence or word level)

My intent with this list is not to establish all that may occur during composing. Rather, I suggest activities in which a writer may engage so that my class will be aware of these and may discuss them.

Through such instruction and assignments, I portray composing as developing meaning, with concern about surface features late in the process. Also, students' coursework trains them to write in accord with this view.

In English 101 I ask students to draft in pencil, to underscore that their drafts are transitory, not final, and need not be perfect. Also, I suggest ways to postpone editing, such as marking a problematic passage and writing in options, to reexamine later. After students write a draft in class, I request that they evaluate it according to a written list of requirements, concerning global to sentence-level matters. During two to three class meetings, students draft again and review their

drafts, in terms of the same requirements. Students write the final version in ink, but may neatly correct errors.

Later in the term, students must bring two extra copies of an out-of-class draft, to receive feedback from their classmates. The directions for peer-editing (comparable to those for reviewing an in-class essay) concern global to sentence level matters. After class, students engage in rewriting activities and draft a new version. Then they peer-edit in class again, in terms of an assignment's requirements, and, out of class, rewrite and draft once more. They may neatly correct their final typed drafts.

If we agree with Murray, we realize that all this drafting, redrafting, and peer-editing involve grammar (238-39). So, too, does a student's correction of errors on a graded essay. How else may a student learn grammar, usage, and mechanics by reading, writing, and revision (Murray 238-39; Akin)?

In my conferences with individual students, each reads an essay aloud to ongoing evaluative comment. I allow students to correct errors that they spot. Otherwise, I mark a problem and comment about it, teaching a brief lesson if necessary. Students also discuss their essays and ask questions. Thus, I explain an error so that a student understands it and knows how to correct it.

In the writing center I similarly refer a student to his or her own work for the student to detect and to correct problems. After explaining any remaining ones, I ask the student to write a comparable passage, in order to determine if he or she can omit the errors. In these ways I focus on the students' writing, not on grammatical abstractions, nor on isolated, strange sentences in an exercise.

These are but a few easy ways to instruct students with correctness a late priority, related to their texts. Certainly, other writing instructors engage in practices with a similar intent, for students to persist with elaboration until time to address correctness. It would be beneficial for writing instructors to share their practices. It is not sufficient simply to reject formal grammar study and relegate learning correctness to reading, writing, and revision. Unless we plan for students to develop correctness contextually, their learning, at best, may be haphazard or scanty. To put correctness in its proper place, we must have a suitable pedagogy.

Note

[1] Unlike their model ("A Cognitive Process Theory of Writing," CCC 32 [1981]: 370), this list avoids mention of a "monitor," an artificial phrase for "the writer's mind making decisions" (Patricia Bizzell, "Cognition, Convention, and Certainty: What We Need to Know about Writing," PRE/TEXT 3 [1982]: 222) or of the writer's memory, which a writer implicitly possesses.

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LITERATURE LOGS: A TOOL FOR DIALOGUE AND RESPONSE

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For two years, facilitating a writing workshop (as opposed to a traditional English class) for eighth graders in a rural school in Kershaw, SC, evolved as one of the most rewarding experiences of my life. After many trials, tears, laughter, a significant increase in state-mandated test scores, and hard work, I had become comfortable with my curriculum. Then my principal asked me if I would like to teach reading the next year. Speechless at first I collected my thoughts and immediately inquired: "Do I have to use the basal?" He replied with a smile, "No, you can do the same things you are doing now." Although somewhat relieved, I was still confronted by the problem. How could I document the skills, processes, and learning of my students' engagements with reading?

I turned to my curricular "Bible"--*In the Middle* (Atwell 1987). I had relied heavily on Atwell's research in my writing workshop, and now I turned to it again. The basic elements of the Writing workshop consisted of time, response, and ownership. Students were given predictable blocks of time in which to write. In my class, we wrote three to four days per week. The students depended upon this class time, and soon they rushed to class with ideas and excitement. Ownership meant that my students created their own topics; I did not choose for them. All of their work generated from their interests, ideas, and creativity. Response in the form of peer interaction and editing conferences with me were crucial. All of Atwell's concepts worked well with adolescents. Would a reading workshop operate in like manner?

On the first day of school, I announced to my students that our reading class would be a place where we would read "real" books (as opposed to the contrived and controlled stories of a basal reader), talk about books, and write about books. Three days a week would be devoted to reading books of their own choosing. Atwell's premises of time and ownership were incorporated immediately. Response would be in the form of literature logs. I stressed at the beginning that these logs would be the most important aspect of our class. Little did I realize at that time exactly how important they would become.

The requirements of the class were simple. On the days that we read, everyone was required to bring a book to class, prepared to spend time immersing him/herself in literature. If the student truly engaged with the book all period (read all period), a maximum of five points was given. These points comprised one-third of their reading grade. The students were required to write one letter to me each week about the books they were reading. I emphasized that I did not want to know the plot of the book--I wanted to know their reactions, their thinking, and their questions. The literature logs comprised another one-third of their grade. I also told my students that the reading workshop would be their favorite class. I received many dubious glances.

There are so many stories to tell, but I will focus on three students who emerged as three of the most interesting and exciting for me as a teacher-

researcher. I hope their stories will demonstrate the power and potential of writing as a means of engaging with literature.

David:

David entered my class labeled as remedial due to past failures on standardized tests. His attitude and behavior displayed shyness and reluctance in terms of taking a risk with his reading. At first, he was unwilling to venture beyond brief plot retelling. His initial data showed me that he had not previously invested a personal interest in reading. David related in his pre-reading survey that in the last twelve months, he had read only two books and did not have a favorite author. In response to the question, "How do you feel about reading in general?", he wrote "Do not like reading!" His first letter to me in his literature log was short, terse, and related only the plot of the story:

> 8-29-90
>
> S. E.
> Hinton
>
> The
> Outsiders
>
> This book is pretty good, it has lots of action. One of the outsiders, the littlest, got in a fight. I'm on page 11 right now.

My response:

> Dear David,
> I promise that you will love this book. It is filled with all different kinds of emotions. It is definitely one of my favorites.
> Keep reading!
> Mrs. T

All of the preliminary data informed me that David had not been provided with any real experience in terms of literature. He had never been given the opportunity to find relationships between what he read and his life experiences. He did not know how to convey his feelings and reactions about his book. But the data also informed me that David needed lots of meaning and transaction. As the year progressed, I observed that David immersed himself more and more in the literate environment I tried to create. He took risks in his letter writing and he grew as a reader. And he was hooked on S. E. Hinton! An entry on 11-28-90 stated:

> S. E.
> Hinton
>
> That was then
> This is Know

That was a good book. I didn't like the way it end. It was a lot better than the Outsiders. Taming of the Star Runner was better than both of them. Taming of the Star Runner was the best I ever read by S. E. Hinton. Could I write to her. Could you get her address.

David's letter demonstrated empowerment. He not only risked criticizing the author, but he also wanted to write to her and share his feelings. And he continued to "outgrow himself."

At the end of the first semester, I asked my students to reread their logs and write their reflections in a letter to me. I invited them to find patterns or entries which surprised them. David wrote:

1-23-91

Reading, Writing, and Spelling

I like reading as you now. Reading is fun. If you read over the things I wrote in here. You will see a lot of mistspelled words, that I should no how to spell. I need help with spelling, but I got to help myself first. So I'm going to start this week not next week. Spelling and saying words is keeping me from reading faster. I would like your help.

David

My response:

1-23-90

Dear David,

Rarely do I read an entry that is so insightful and honest and reflective! You have thought and assessed exactly what your weakness is and have sought help to accomplish your goal. I applaud you!

My advice is to keep reading as much as possible for pleasure.

Don't worry a whole lot about your spelling--some people are just poor spellers (usually the brightest) and that's why we have EDITORS!

Thanks for sharing this with me. I will continue to support and encourage you.

Love,
Mrs. T

David's reflection portrayed a young man who had grown confident that sharing his weakness would provide a supportive response. He knew where he was in the continuum of his growth, where he wanted to go, and how he planned to get there.

By the end of the year, David's growth as a reader and one who constructed personal meaning through writing was phenomenal. Recorded on his

final evaluation in response to the question, "What are the most important things you have learned in your literature logs?":

> I liked writing in my literature logs. Evertime I wrote in it I tryed to guess what you were going to write back. It was fun writing to you. I wish we can do it next year to.

On his post-reading survey, David stated that he had read fifteen books, ("more than I have read in years"), his favorite author was "the author of the Hardy Boys," and he currently felt that "now I do like reading." And he was "de-labeled" (no longer remedial) because he met the standard on our state-mandated testing (Basic Skills Assessment Program). I learned from David that reluctant readers need lots of time and patience. He had experienced failure for so long that any aggressive behaviors on my part probably would have turned him off to reading forever.

Katie:

Katie presented a very different story in that she entered my class as an exceptional student. She was labeled an "advanced" student. But Katie was similar to David in many ways. She was extremely shy and recorded on her pre-reading survey that she had read only four books in the past twelve months, had never reread a book, and seldom read at home for pleasure. Through Katie's log, many exciting and sad discoveries emerged throughout the year.

Her first log entry:

> 8-30-90
>
> Mrs. T,
> I really enjoy this class. It gives me a chance to clear my mind and relax, This book I'm reading is good. Well, see ya'.
> Yours truly,
> Katie

My response:

> 9-4-90
>
> Dear Katie,
> Thanks! I'm glad that you like the class. I, too, feel the same way about reading for pleasure--it's a way to relax.
> Tell me next time what book and why you think it's good.
> Mrs. T

I sensed immediately that Katie was ready for a gentle "nudge." She continued to "play it safe" for a month or so; she was not ready to take risks. Like David, she had been programmed by past curricula to play "the one right answer" game. Rarely did we talk to each other in class; our dialogue centered in the log.

After Christmas, Katie told me that her mother was dying of cancer. An incredible bond formed and grew. Her log enabled me to become her compassionate confidante and reading became her sanest escape from heartache.

Her mid-year reflection mirrored my assessment of her current behaviors:

1-23-91

Dear Mrs. T,

After reading over my journal I have noticed that over the past few months we've been in school I can really express my feelings about my reading, writing, and personal things. I think that in my overall writings in my log that my favorite authors are Duncan and Zindel. (Although I need to work on elaborating when talking about them). I think lit. logs are a great idea. Sometimes its easier to write than actually talk!

Love,
Katie

Katie was an empowered learner, and I believe that her last statement described her personal feelings. Her entry also demonstrated that she realized where she was in terms of her reading and where she needed to improve. Her honesty was revealing and poignant.

The post-reading survey stated that she had read nineteen books, she had reread a book to "see what it would be like to read it and know what happened in the end," and she read often at home. Her autobiography (telling me how she had grown and changed as a reader this year) portrayed a confident and mature reader:

My outlook on reading is very high since the beginning of the year. I've read a variety of books this year to give me a feel of different styles. Realistic books such as Judy Blume are my favorite books. Every once in a while you need to break the cycle of things so that's when I read a Zindel book.

I've grown in my reading this year because I used to look upon it as something I did every once in a while but now I read on a regular bases. Reading now relaxes me from the real world and I get captured in the characters body. Reading give me a chance to "get away" from everything. This year has been great especially this class. I wish I could be in a class like this next year but not all things are possible. I will continue reading throughout the summer and continue through the years.

Katie exceeded my expectations a thousandfold. Reading is a priority in her life and will continue to be so; I have no doubts about that.

Jason:

Jason was an outgoing, delightful boy; he thrived on having fun at all times. He was also highly intelligent and desperately unmotivated; the initial data

was a cry for help. Jason needed a challenge and the workshop provided that and much more for him. On his pre-reading survey, Jason stated that he had read nine books last year (none during the summer), he did not read at home for pleasure, and he did not have a favorite author. One of his first letters to me read:

> 9-14-90
>
> The Choose your own adventure books are good I finished one two times. I also like A light in the attic. Those poems are funny. I finished it too. Well I must go.
>
> Jason

Because students were encouraged to select their own books, Jason discovered fantasy and science fiction books. Ursula LeGuin and Lloyd Alexander opened up a whole new world for him. He became so enthralled with LeGuin's EarthSea trilogy that he decided to write her to see if she would allow him to use her characters as the basis for a Nintendo game!

At the end of the year, Jason wrote on his post-reading survey that he had read fifteen books, that he read frequently at home, and that his favorite authors were Ursula LeGuin and Lloyd Alexander. He revealed in his autobiography:

> This year, the 8th grade. I have had the bad books along with the good. I first started out reading Choose your own adventure books. That was the bad. Those books had no real characters or adventure. It didn't have intellectual "meat"! I thought I liked them, but now I wonder how I could have. I then read a "classic," The Call of the Wild. I grew, in a sense, intellectually. I started to hate choose your own adventure books. I then got into poetry and wrote a play-off of The Raven. I then slipped into the fantasy world of Earthsea. I was now engulfed fully by fantasy. I had now fully went from cheap old choose books to intellectually "fat" fantasy books. i have grown from the bad to the ugly and finally to the good!

I learned from Jason when to intervene and when not to "butt in." He showed me that when students are surrounded by those who are "joyfully literate," they, too, become ecstatically literate. Jason displayed for me the power of reflection. His final evaluation enabled him to reflect in such a way that he saw how much he had "outgrown his former self"!

Implications for the Middle School Classroom:

What messages and lessons do these stories tell me as a classroom teacher of reading? I learned that Atwell's principles do work for a reading workshop, but these students displayed insights far beyond what I had predicted. As I step back and try to decide what mattered for me and my students, I believe that the building of a community of learners was most crucial. I tried to create a safe environment where risks could be taken to facilitate growth and empowerment. Students chose books which best suited their emerging needs,

purposes, and interests. I believe that learning with and from my students provided demonstrations of a "joyfully literate" adult. Showing students what mattered most to me--their thinking, their reactions to literature, and their questions--created life-long learners and inquirers. And as the flip-side, they created a teacher who believes in classroom-based research in order to provide informed curricular decisions.

New Beginning:

David, Katie, and Jason represented only three of my students who were empowered through writing to discover. The logs transformed our lives. Bonds were formed, risks were taken, and life-long readers were created, all accomplished through dialogue and response. I want to learn more in terms of how our dialogue informed curricular decisions and student growth. I want to know more about the power of adolescent literature and why it seems to have such a profound effect on my students. I want to know how better to promote reflective thinking. These ponderings will be the basis for classroom-based research for next year. These questions also present a challenge for me and other teachers of adolescents.

Work Cited

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Book Reviews

COOPER, MARILYN M., AND MICHAEL HOLZMAN. *WRITING AS SOCIAL ACTION.* **BOYNTON/COOK, 1989.**

The authors of *Writing As Social Action* assert that writing is a form of social action because "It is part of the way in which some people live in the world." Their collection of essays, which draws on scholarship in a variety of disciplines--rhetoric, philosophy, literary theory, sociology, sociolinguistics, to name a few--suggests many potentially effective teaching strategies and program designs. Cooper, associate professor of English in the Humanities Department at Michigan Technological University, and Holzman, an author of articles on literacy, education, literary theory and literary history, are teachers, and their hands-on approach and philosophy are integral facets of these essays. By viewing writing as social action, they attempt to explain why students are often alienated and why a good portion of the research and theory in writing processes ends up being inapplicable to actual writing pedagogy.

This entire collection of essays is well-written and thought-provoking, even for those not familiar with either Freire or social theories of writing and literacy. Three of Cooper's essays--"Unhappy Consciousness in First-Year English: How to Figure Things Our for Yourself," "The Ecology of Writing," and "Women's Ways of Writing"--are especially intriguing. In "The Ecology of Writing," for example, Cooper argues for abandoning the romance of the solitary writer and instead consider writing as an activity "through which a person is continually engaged with a variety of socially constituted systems." She notes that "purposes, like ideas, arise out of interaction." The metaphor Cooper uses for the kind of writing suggested by the ecological model is the web, "in which anything that affects one strand of the web vibrates throughout the whole." Most classroom teachers have seen this metaphor in action; students will often either embrace or reject a teacher's project as a group or as individuals and in doing so, have significant impact on the teacher's agenda. Cooper suggests the teacher take advantage of this aspect of the learning (and writing) process and discover ways, along with students, to interact within the various social systems already present, with an eye, perhaps, to changing them.

This book is particularly rewarding because it is reality-based; the research is the practice of writing with diverse groups of writers in the workplace and the academic world. Sometimes those involved with theorizing forget about actuality, and Cooper and Holzman remind us that "when thinking about writing, we must also think about the way that people live in the world."

Virginia Dumont
Lander College

GROSSMAN, FLORENCE. *LISTENING TO THE BELLS: LEARNING TO READ POETRY BY WRITING POETRY.* **HEINEMANN, 1991.**

There is poetry in all of us. Our feeling, our memories, and our dreams can be expressed in poetic form. This, in a simple statement, is the premise that Florence Grossman uses in her text for poetry writing. Directed towards children in the approximate age range of ten to fourteen, the book is an important attempt to reach children at a time when they begin to lose their enthusiasm for this literary form.

Grossman's method is the same in all ten chapters of the book. She presents a general topic and the possibilities that the topic suggests. She then shows what a professional poet has done with the topic and follows it with examples from student poets, and after that, more poems by established poets.

The strength of the book is in the subjects it presents. For the student who thinks poetry is all about love, flowers, and butterflies, the book can open enticing possibilities for writing. Grossman's poetic examples deal with fear, with transformations, and even with concrete things such as rooms. In a short section at the end of the book, she offers some teaching suggestions.

Although the book includes a wonderful array of possible topics for poetry, it has one serious defect: It does not provide guidance for growth in the poetic process. Students are encouraged to write free verse compositions on their own experiences in the first chapter, and each chapter continues the process, with only the subject matter becoming more complex. One would expect to see the text also making the student more aware of the complexities of language and the sharpness of images, not to mention the possibilities of poetic forms.

Despite its limitations, *Listening to the Bells* should not be easily dismissed by the junior high language arts teacher. The book offers a hands-on, unintimidating approach to both reading and writing poetry. It may not foster a great deal of growth in the career of the young poet, but it may give the average student more understanding and appreciation of what poetry is all about.

Mary H. McNulty
Francis Marion University

MATALENE, CAROLYN B. *WORLDS OF WRITING: TEACHING AND LEARNING IN DISCOURSE COMMUNITIES OF WORK.* **RANDOM HOUSE, 1989.**

The avant garde rock band "Talking Heads" released an album several years ago entitled "Stop Making Sense," a rhythmic and linguistic fiasco that establishes frenzied nonsense as a standard for modern communication. This absurdist notion does not seem entirely off base when one thinks of how the specialized vocabulary of modern professionals and technocrats has made verbal and written communication even more complex than it already was. Moreover, when one places the traditional expectations of the English instructor beside the actual writing tasks that a student will eventually be asked to carry out in the modern workplace, the disparity between the standards of traditional academe and the writing required of workaday professionals does seem absurd.

Carolyn Matalene's fine edition of essays, therefore, could be retitled "Start Making Sense" in that Matalene draws together a community of writers who collectively insist that classroom writing instruction should be directed toward the specialized communication needs of the working world. It is to Matalene's credit that this collection is uncharacteristic in its ability to provide a focused and well-structured statement concerning its subject. The essays, each of which pinpoint a specific area of concern, were apparently selected with care, and the collection is structured in a way that makes the overall work accessible and engaging. The relationship between the world of academic writing and the other "worlds" of writing in the workplace is the chief point of concern in the opening sections; however, specific ways to integrate these worlds in the classroom are also discussed in articles that target specific issues. For instance, the transition from teaching literary writing to teaching writing in the non-literary areas of technical writing and business writing is covered in articles written by English professors who have had to make this transition. In the later sections, the collection provides articles by several experts who have worked as writing consultants in the fields of manufacturing, journalism, finance, electronics, and law. A number of training techniques are covered, including a discussion of group writing practices in business management environments and articles on the "coaching" of individual writers in the newsroom

Matalene's collection provides a thorough look at the various "worlds" of writing that are encountered in a number of business environments. These essays, therefore, are necessary and useful continuations of the ideas presented in *Writing in Nonacademic Settings* (1985), the groundbreaking work on this subject edited by Lee Odell and Dixie Goswami. These and other statements on the problems that surround the teaching of composition in the academic setting provide welcome alternatives to traditional instruction. Also, by suggesting a number of ways in which our talents as English instructors are used in a variety of corporate and business settings, this type of research does much to defeat the myth that our field only provides superfluous skills and useless knowledge.

Thomas Dabbs
Francis Marion University

SIMONS, ELIZABETH RADIN. *STUDENT WORLDS, STUDENT WORDS: TEACHING WRITING THROUGH FOLKLORE.* **BOYNTON/COOK, 1990.**

The composition teacher seeking rich material and another approach to the process of decentering student writing would do well to give more than a casual glance at *Student Worlds, Student Words*. Using the catalyst of modern folklore, Simons gives numerous ways of tapping individual knowledge and leading the student from the initial expressive response to referential writing. It is a finely tuned means of not only drawing out the reticent writer, but also bridging diverse elements in the multi-cultural classroom. The combined disciplines of modern folklore and writing here seem so cohesive as to be a natural mode for encouraging writing fluency from the beginning. First, there is an inspection of the student's own folklore background and then the move to the exploration of the

self's "outside," seen as part of the bigger whole. The student, then has begun with himself as the core curriculum and ended by placing himself in an historic context.

Simons devotes the first two chapters to establishing modern folklore as a serious discipline and writing as a process-oriented activity. However, the author advises the busy reader to return to these initial segments later, if necessary, since the remaining chapters suggest different folklore genre as writing projects exclusive of the background information. Some of the genre include the folklore of naming, childhood, school, teen-age, family stories and photography; subsequent chapters deal with folk heroes, modern urban legends and graffiti.

The last chapter, "Nuke the Raiders," begins with brainstorming for the classroom's collective knowledge of graffiti. The student is then asked to explore his own memories and attitudes toward the subject in writing. These may range from inspecting past personal participation in graffiti to looking at motivation for having done so. This unit then turns to the historic perspective, beginning with the cave paintings of the prehistoric, skipping to Pompeii; then it moves to the scrawled knights of the Medieval period and further to Thomas Hardy's complaint that "every gatepost and barn's door you come to is sure to have some bad word or other chalked upon it by the young rascals--a woman can hardly pass for shame sometimes."

The march toward the contemporary continues by inspecting marginal comments in a nineteenth century textbook, World War II's and the Vietnam War's contributions, and finally the incorporation of graffiti motifs on current day Swatch watches. The unit concludes with individual research projects which explore various aspects such as identifying male and female problem solving styles and attitudes toward violence as expressed in graffiti from school lavatories.

Simons is long on practicality, coming from a decade of using these techniques in the classroom, both in individual teaching and numerous classroom workshops. Her book reflects her sound grounding in folklore as well, and her enthusiasm for her subject is contagious.

Also, there is a generous offering of resources, some helpful to teachers for background, others for student use. Another plus is the fact that this approach to writing, it seems to me, is equally valuable on different levels of application. The middle or high school teacher as well as the college writing instructor will find here much palatable food for thought.

Katherine Boling
Francis Marion University

ZINSSER, WILLIAM. *ON WRITING WELL.* **4TH ED. HARPER PERENNIAL, 1990.**

Searching for a guidebook to help your writing students? Don't look to William Zinsser's latest edition of *On Writing Well.* Zinsser's "Informal Guide to Writing Nonfiction" is long on personal anecdotes and short on practical skills.

The first edition of Zinsser's book grew from his experiences as a writing instructor at Yale. The changes of the second and third editions included new

chapters on *humorous and business writing, using word processors, and* recognizing nonfiction as the new American literature. In his recent fourth edition, Zinsser adds two new chapters, "Writing About Yourself" and "A Writer's Decisions." To make this edition a product for the 90's, he expands his sample writings to include four nonfiction women writers and revises the text to eliminate sexist usage.

The book, divided into three sections, emphasizes simplicity and the necessity of rewriting. The first section, entitled "Principles," covers word choice and usage. Part II, "Forms" discusses the basic elements of nonfiction writing with advice on gathering material. He also surveys the different types of this genre--writing for technology and science, business and education, sports, humor and criticism. The third section, "Attitudes," reveals Zinsser's opinions about editors and his prejudices regarding style and content.

Zinsser uses material from his articles while a writer for the *New York Herald Tribune* and *Life* as examples of nonfiction style and structure. In "Trust Your Material," he recalls how he decided not to write in first person in an article about two jazz musicians who visit China, and then he drifts off into an explanation of how this story expanded into his first book. He attempts to get back on the subject by relating how he chose to use first person narration for a piece on baseball, but he quickly digresses into his love of the sport. These personal experiences have potential as examples of writing techniques, but they merely become tedious war stories.

In the chapter "Humor," Zinsser uses the information from a course he created and taught at Yale. He relates that he expected to produce witty writers, not whimsical ones, by adhering to the traditions of humorous writing. But the chapter becomes little more than a compilation of names like Garrison Keillor, Erma Bombeck, James Thurber, etc., and Zinsser's opinions of their work.

The reader must struggle with Zinsser's vagueness throughout the book. In the chapter "Bits and Pieces," he says that taste separates the good writer from the mediocre. But this sage comment becomes useless when he follows it with, "It [taste] can't be defined, but we know it when we see it." This ambiguity also proves troublesome in the chapter on leads. He says that the lead is the most important part of the writing and that the reader must know "very soon" where the piece is going or will become disinterested. But writing students need specific guidelines on how to hook a reader and how much time they have to do it. Without any precise strategies, his advice to inexperienced writers becomes nothing more than platitude.

The book's narrative structure presents the biggest obstacle to the reader. A reader searching for tools and methods to improve writing skills must sift through paragraph after paragraph of personal stories and thoughts before getting to any substantive advice. In the chapter "Nonfiction as Literature," the reader must wade through four paragraphs on an interview Zinsser had with a radio host and two paragraphs on the Book-of-the-Month Club before reaching the point of the chapter--writing nonfiction motivates us. The reader needs motivation to reach the message amid all the clutter. It's these tangents and digressions that detract from what helpful information or advice might be found in the text.

For a reader interested in a personal account of one writer's thoughts and experiences regarding his craft, Zinsser's book provides a satisfying narrative. But

the textual and structural obstacles prevent it from being a practical guidebook for the writing teacher or student.

Dianne P. Ledford
Tennessee Technological Univ.

BELANOFF, PAT, AND MARCIA DICKSON, EDS. *PORTFOLIOS.* BOYNTON/COOK, 1991.

This collection of twenty-three articles by different authors, plus a foreword by Peter Elbow and an introduction by the editors, seems a comprehensive reference book for those interested in portfolio assessment. Articles are divided into four sections, "Portfolios for Proficiency Testing," "Program Assessment," "Classroom Portfolios," and "Political Issues," a utilitarian system enabling administrators, composition directors, or individual teachers to quickly discover the aspects of this form of evaluation with which they are personally concerned.

The section entitled "Portfolios For Proficiency Testing" concentrates upon the various situations, such as placement tests or exit exams, in which the use of a portfolio, a packet of the student's best writing, seems to be a fairer means of evaluating ability. This approach will make sense to those in the discipline who feel that a timed essay, a single sample involving only one writing genre, cannot accurately measure a student's overall skills. This approach will also seem more attractive to those teachers who desire a method of evaluation that encourages students to use the process approach that most of us use in the classroom; unlike timed exams, the portfolio system rewards prewriting, drafting, and revision. Most of the articles note the problems caused by these large scale changes in evaluation, such as the lack of faculty concensus about which aspects of writing actually reflect competency, or the possibility that standards will be lowered when students are evaluated upon compositions that have undergone numerous revisions and are thereby atypical. The situations involved in this section of the book are diverse, involving suggestions from British grade schools to American Master's degree programs.

Equally varied are the scenarios discussed in the articles of section two, "Program Assessment," most of which concern discoveries about how and how much students actually learn about writing in composition classes. Because portfolios usually include all assignments, including drafts and revisions, and not just the polished pieces to be evaluated, there is a clear record of development. Student metacognative skills improve when they are aware of how their intellectual skills evolve. Composition directors and teachers find portfolio assessment beneficial for measuring what types of assignments seem to work best. Further, when students were asked to collect writing from courses in disciplines other than English into a college career portfolio, it was discovered--predictably--that students had not been asked to use composition skills very frequently.

Section three, "Classroom Portfolios," contains those articles in this collection most applicable to and practical for the individual teacher. This section gives hope to the instructor wanting to use current theories of composition and

pedagogy in composition courses. All of the difficulties one can imagine such a system would entail are here discussed and artfully solved. The bottom line seems to be that portfolio course teachers, who are excited by the rewarding prospect of not simply writing comments on essays in order to justify grades, are better able to encourage and empower students to assume responsibility for their own improvement.

The diffusing of power is also one of the main subjects in the final section, "Political Issues," but the focus here is more upon the changing faculty role. Particularly in English departments where all members are forced to use portfolio assessment, many problems arise. Primarily because teachers must understand each other's writing assignments and classroom goals before they can adequately evaluate a portfolio, the issue of academic freedom must be addressed. Should, for example, a tenured full professor who feels that her personal system adequately and fairly evaluates writing progress be expected to allow other teachers to study her methods and assess her students' work? The undermining of ultimate authority has caused some bruised egos, but it seems true that we need more peer review in our largely unregulated system. It is shown in these articles that faculty arguments about writing standards are ultimately good for English departments because they foster professional growth and increase ideological sensitivity.

Although the articles in *Portfolios* involve a wide variety of settings and purposes, the strengths and weaknesses of this form of evaluation remain fairly constant from author to author; it is this similarity that is both the best and the worst aspect of this text. While the authors note different ways of dealing with the general format, they mostly discuss the same pros and cons in a way that might seem maddeningly redundant. The frequently repeated beneficial aspects of portfolio assessment are, of course, not terribly problematic and make one feel that this is the ideal alternative method for those uncomfortable with the accountability movement that has become so prevalent in higher education in the past decades. Teachers do not need to justify grades in a dictatorial tone but can, through beneficial comments, focus on student improvement. Even weak writers or students with low academic self-esteem will only be graded upon their best work, three or four highly polished and frequently revised pieces of writing. These works are chosen by the student, so he or she has a feeling of improvement and, hopefully some pride in ownership. The editor/helper/teacher is in a more pleasant position because the student is naturally more committed to improvement.

Further, the English department, when the entire faculty uses portfolio assessment, is also in a position designed to foster learning and update writing competency standards because some form of concensus must be met before evaluating can begin. Through discussions of various grading criteria, faculty grow closer professionally and more clearly define the goals of their institution. That the portfolio system is extremely malleable and able to be adopted by nearly any school is clearly shown in the variety of situations elaborated in the articles.

Still, beneficial as the system is in some aspects, it is equally detrimental in others. As the editors themselves assert, it is "messy, bulky, nonprogrammable, not easily scored, [and] time consuming" (xx). It is messy, not simply in terms of increased paper loads, but also because of faculty egos. The system seems to work best with the collaboration of at least two other faculty members. Just this

few evaluators requires compromise, professional involvement, and shared assignments. When the system is adapted by an entire department, it is easy to see how questions of academic freedom can occur. Who decides which teaching style and which genre emphasis will define writing competency? The system demands that nearly all aspects of the teaching environment will be discussed, but some teachers balk at this amount of outside involvement in their routines. Even those teachers who would be willing to allow their habits to be shared with colleagues are daunted from using portfolios because they seem to involve more work for the teacher of composition, especially at mid-term and finals when the literature classes they teach must be evaluated as well.

Faculty must also be prepared to diffuse the concerns of grade obsessed students who want constant "guesstimates" of scores and who will revise each assignment *ad nauseum*. Conversely, the instructor must also expect the equally disinterested students who will only write the three or four essays that they will ultimately submit for evaluation and ignore other assignments without even attempting them; these students will never revise, having learned too well the lesson of a system ultimately based upon standardized testing that does not allow time for prewriting, drafting, or editing. Also, students know that for exams in other academic disciplines that require essays, there is the need to write quickly without much revision in a time-limited situation.

Revision becomes the basis of student/teacher instruction in a portfolio system, so several articles in this text discuss the problem of plagiarism: when students are encouraged to get help from the instructor, lab tutors, classmates, friends, or family, does there come a point at which the writing no longer counts as their own? Further, when students turn in several polished pieces of writing that demand a grade higher then they could have earned in a typical composition class where revisions are not so strongly encouraged, the issue of grade inflation must be a concern. Another difficulty is that all this revision makes it a must that students have access to computers and know how to use them.

Portfolios is a comprehensive text designed to make a reader consider all aspects of composition, particularly how it should be taught and assessed. For those readers left feeling that they need further information, the end of the book contains a bibliography of more articles about portfolio evaluation. However, the text is so comprehensive in scope that most readers will feel able to make an informed decision about whether or not a portfolio system would enhance their students' composition skills. Should this form of assessment be adopted, English instructors will have in *Portfolios* a useful source to refer to for motivation and creative problem solving.

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HASHIMOTO, IRVIN Y. ***THIRTEEN WEEKS: A GUIDE TO TEACHING COLLEGE WRITING.*** **BOYNTON/COOK, 1991.**

Although written for college teachers and although containing some material too complex for younger students, *Thirteen Weeks* may interest all writing

teachers. Many of Hashimoto's ideas apply in any classroom, in part because the author envisions his book as "not about particular 'methods' . . . but about thinking about methods and thinking about why we want to do things in the classroom in the first place."

Part One, "Plans and Assumptions," contains three chapters, whose titles suggest their contents: "Things We'd Like to Do But Can't Always Do," "Simple Things," "Issues in Course Design." Hashimoto doubts that we can teach students such virtues as honesty, integrity, and interdisciplinary thinking; and he finds fashionable emphasis on matters such as issue trees, Alexander Bain, tagmemics, generative grammar as impractical and misguided as traditional practices such as five-paragraph themes and comparison/contrast essays.

Because Hashimoto focuses on academic writing (as opposed to personal narrative, for example), he emphasizes prose dealing with other people's ideas, with simple data, and with argument. But whatever we emphasize, Hashimoto insists, we should consider exactly how much teaching time we have, should select realistic goals for students, and should recognize how each classroom activity furthers our goals. If we neglect any of these areas, Hashimoto contends, we don't know what we're doing.

Part Two deals with "Assignments and Evaluation." Hashimoto recommends many short assignments supplemented by only a few long ones. Well-constructed and open-ended short assignments help simplify writing problems for students and allow them better mastery of concepts such as a thesis sentence. Students also need detailed explanations, he argues, of the exact criteria we will use to grade each paper (minus 5 points for each error in following directions, for example).

Part Three, "Essentials," begins with a description of a workshop on parallel constructions, an illustration of how Hashimoto applies his principles in his own classes. The remaining chapters in "Essentials" discuss techniques and assignments on some of the "simple things" Hashimoto teaches freshmen: "Labeling, Sorting, and Displaying Information," "Thesis Statements," "Introductions and Conclusions," "Highlighting Information," "Introducing and Interpreting Other People's Ideas," "Controlling Quotations," and "Teaching Documentation." Here again Hashimoto reminds us that students may be bewildered by conventions that seem simple to us (ways of introducing quotations, for example).

Part Four consists of chapters on style and grammar, an essay entitled "Some Final Comments," and four appendices (including a sample syllabus and sample assignments).

A refreshing and innovative guide, *Thirteen Weeks* will challenge every teacher who reads it. When the author cites his numerous teaching awards, we may question his modesty, but never his competence. When he dismisses the importance of teaching revision, we may feel annoyed but will reexamine our purposes and techniques. When he ignores personal narratives, we may believe he is wresting students' writing from them, but we will muster further support for our own pedagogy.

Unlike many composition texts and teaching guides, *Thirteen Weeks* is a unique creation rather than an ingenuous clone. Filled with wit, good

sense, and practicality, this book provides a useful and valuable addition to the field.

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